

Alcohol Healthwatch Media Release 09/10/2014

More to be done on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

A 'Call to Action' released today calls for more to be done to address Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in New Zealand.

Alcohol Healthwatch's FASD Coordinator Christine Rogan, says far too little is done to prevent this brain-based disability and to improve the lives of individuals with FASD and their families. FASD is an issue that is too costly to ignore. "There is no doubt that FASD is challenging. On the one hand you have alcohol, a harmful drug that is universally available and widely promoted as an everyday commodity. On the other, babies continuing to be born damaged by it. Their difficulties grow as they grow and that require a higher level of understanding and response than they are currently receiving," she says.

The Call to Action is based on information shared at the FASD Symposium and a Policy and Research Roundtable hosted by the University of Auckland's Centre for Addiction Research and Alcohol Healthwatch in September. The events, attended by researchers, teachers, health professional, family advocates and others, aimed to advance knowledge and prioritise action in the areas of prevention, research and care delivery.

The Call to Action specifies a number of priorities for action including support for New Zealand to be part of a World Health Organisation study to ascertain the prevalence of FASD.

Following recommendations from the Health Select Committee in 2013, the Government has begun some FASD planning. Ms Rogan hopes that the 'Call to Action' from the workforce and families living with FASD will go some way towards informing the outcomes of this. She says, "We know FASD is a misunderstood and underestimated problem. Tackling it needs everyone working in the same direction, with the needs of the children and their families at the forefront".

Ends:

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A copy of the 'FASD Call to Action Consensus Statement' is available to download from www.fan.org.nz